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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
Annual session 1995
22-26 May 1995

STATEMENT OF ROTARY INTERNATIONAL TO THE 1995 ANNUAL SESSION OF THE UNICEF EXECUTIVE BOARD

1. It is an honour to announce today that the Rotary Award for World Understanding has been awarded to the late James P. Grant, former Executive Director of UNICEF. This award, established in 1980, is bestowed upon a person who has provided distinguished service, through humanitarian efforts, to the cause of international understanding and peace. Previous recipients include former United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, former United States President Jimmy Carter, Pope John Paul II, and Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech Republic.

2. The award will be accepted formally by UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy on 12 June at the Rotary International Convention to be held in France. The award includes a $100,000 gift from The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International, which may be used to further the work for which the award winner is honoured.

3. With unparalleled energy and zeal, Jim Grant stormed the parapets of childhood disease with the low-cost weapons of vaccine, oral rehydration therapy and nutritional supplements. He was a friend to Rotary, helping to establish Rotary International, with its 1.2 million community leaders in 184 countries, as full partners in the war on vaccine-preventable diseases.

4. Rotary, through its PolioPlus programme, has contributed more than $200 million dollars for the purchase of polio vaccine and has mobilized thousands of volunteers to help bring vaccines and children together. The resulting partnership, which has been called one of the greatest public/private initiatives in history, has achieved great progress in the war against polio. One hundred and forty-five nations reported zero polio cases last year, an increase from 84 countries just 10 years earlier.

5. Rotary International urges UNICEF and all other partners, including Governments, to continue to devote the financial and technical resources needed to achieve the goal of polio eradication by the year 2000. Global eradication will require that all polio-endemic countries implement national immunization days and other strategies recommended by the World Health Organization by 1997.

6. Rotary will give polio eradication its highest priority. It will provide an additional contribution of more $100 millions towards that effort, plus continued community-level support in the maintenance of immunization levels, national immunization days, surveillance, mopping-up vaccination campaigns, and advocacy among Governments and corporations.

7. The world is on the threshold of victory over the dread disease of polio. When that war is won, the world will save some $1 billion each year when polio immunization no longer becomes necessary. In addition, immense human suffering will be relieved.

8. A victory over polio will provide an important milestone in medical history. Polio would then join smallpox as the second disease to be eradicated from this planet. Such a victory will spur the resolve of all nations to control and eradicate other infectious diseases which today take such a terrible toll among the world's children.

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STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT ATD FOURTH WORLD

The poorest families and UNICEF: a common commitment against extreme poverty

1. UNICEF thinking about reaching the poorest continues. Two decisions of the Executive Board, in 1989 and 1991, had underlined the first steps of these reflections, and introduced a few years earlier by Father Joseph Wresinski, requested the Executive Director to share the lessons learned about this subject. The most important step undertaken in this direction was an evaluation requested of the International Movement ATD Fourth World.

2. Entitled "Reaching the Poorest," this evaluation of seven projects (Burkina Faso, Haiti, Guatemala, Thailand, Canada, Peru and Uganda), undertaken by the Movement or by members of the Permanent Forum on Extreme Poverty in the World attempted to identify the conditions which permit the full participation of the poorest in development projects. Begun in 1992 in cooperation with the UNICEF Evaluation and Research Office, and completed in 1994, this evaluation will be published this coming autumn.

3. In the conclusions of this investigation, three points stand out:

(a) Enabling the very poor to become partners requires knowing them. Their living conditions isolate them and often hide them. Meeting and getting to know them require time, all the more so, as they do not easily express what they really think. Only lasting relationships and trust can further dialogue;

(b) The very poor "survive" thanks to their own efforts. This raises the question of how small projects can be brought to the attention of UNICEF and "qualify" for its support;

(c) A poor community does not speak easily of its poorest members, who are difficult to integrate, especially when the opportunity of a larger development project appears. The tendency will be to exclude them, not purposely, but because their extreme poverty is a barrier to participation. Nevertheless, the study brings to light the efforts of the communities to counter this tendency. These efforts show that only the commitment of an entire community can ensure that the poorest people can take a lasting part in development.

* E/ICEF/1995/13/Rev.1.

4. The international Movement ATD Fourth World hopes that the publication of this study will be an opportunity for the Executive Board to re-explore this question and to examine possible ways to follow-up on it.

5. In the context of this thinking on how to reach the poorest, the late Mr. James Grant welcomed at UNICEF House, last 17 October 1994, on the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, a delegation of persons from 45 countries, made up of parents living in extreme poverty and persons committed to helping them. Together with his colleagues, Mr. Grant wanted to underline his personal commitment, and that of UNICEF, to the struggle of the poorest families so that they will be recognized as full partners for the future of their children and the development of their communities. He said to the delegates, "This obscenity of the violence of poverty need not continue. But still it's up to you and people like you to take the lead, to push for action".

6. These fathers and mothers came to acknowledge UNICEF as being one of the first of the United Nations organizations to be seriously interested in the lives of the very poor, to question itself about whether its programmes could reach the very poor and to want to build with these parents a partnership to assure the well-being of their children. These fathers and mothers reminded participants of their strong desire to be heard and listened to, their will to be recognized as citizens. One delegate asked, "We wonder why those who want to help us don't ask us about our opinions. Can't we help parents to take better care of their children?".

7. Together, the delegates and UNICEF staff restated their refusal of the "silent" marginalization of the poorest nations and of the poorest people within nations to whom Mr. Grant refers in his last State of the World's Children report. This report requests the international community to tackle energetically the question of economic marginalization because no social progress can be sustainable and no human development can be possible as long as economic and social exclusion continue to be the main characteristic of our systems. Together, delegates and members of UNICEF underlined their common will that the concern for the poorest should remain at the heart of their commitments.

8. In Copenhagen, this past March, political leaders made commitments to eradicate extreme poverty as quickly as possible. In paragraph 9 of the Declaration, they affirmed:

> "We gather here to commit ourselves ... to enhancing social development throughout the world so that all men and women, especially those living in poverty, may exercise the rights, utilize the resources and share the responsibilities that enable them to lead satisfying lives ... to contribute to the well-being of their families, their communities and humankind."

9. This commitment is very important as it recognizes that extreme poverty prevents people from exercising their rights, from assuming their responsibilities, and from contributing their share to the advancement of society. The message which the delegates came to share with Mr. Grant on 17 October points in this same direction. The late Executive Director recalled this when he designated the delegates and everyone they represent as "the first actors in the struggle against poverty".

10. The commitments of Copenhagen again give a central place to the question of reaching the poorest by calling, repeatedly, for greater participation in social, economic and political life for all people. This obviously assumes that the conditions for this participation are better known and better taken into account. In this sense, UNICEF is well placed to be able to continue to act as a leader about this question.

11. In the conclusion of his meeting with the delegates last 17 October, Mr. Grant made a remark which, as we look back several months later, also applies to him. In speaking about Father Joseph Wresinski, the founder of the Movement ATD Fourth World, Mr. Grant said, "He is a man who will never die. He sent out ideas and motivated others to action... We owe it to people who have preceded us to make progress".

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STATEMENT BY THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS COMMITTEE ON UNICEF

1. Mr. President, the Non-governmental Organizations (NGO) Committee on UNICEF warmly welcomes the new Executive Director, Carol Bellamy, to her important post, but even more so, to the partnership which UNICEF from its inception has built up with NGOs. Our expectations of her run very high.

2. The spring 1995 issue of Foreign Policy carried an article by the Secretary-General of the United Nations entitled "A New Departure on Development". Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali speaks to the several United Nations conferences which have recently taken place as the "development continuum". He concludes his article by saying, "Our task today is two-fold: first, to concentrate our cooperation on the conflicts now raging in order to deal with them more effectively and make it possible to see beyond them; and second, to recognize that the confrontational perception of the development process in decades past must now be transcended through a new understanding that development is an inescapable need for every nation in the world, and for all nations together".

3. The NGO Committee on UNICEF and its partner organizations around the world are keenly aware that the decade of the 1990s has brought new opportunities as well as new challenges for social development. Clearly it is timely to articulate new partnerships as new ways of accomplishing the development task.

4. To allow this process to take place, the NGO Committee's agenda is focusing on crucial steps necessary for the way to be opened to maximize the opportunities and meet the challenges of the 1990s, the first decade of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

5. It is, of course, within the framework of this vitally important Convention that so many of the activities of the NGO Committee and its members are carried out. It is also within that same framework that the new mission statement for UNICEF needs to articulate an approach to the child in the context of the family and community, and not in isolation of these significant elements in child development. It also needs to recognize the role of the father in parenting and the significance of other sibling members of the family as formative in the development of the individual child. Furthermore, we believe that the mission statement should also include an emphasis on the needs of children in especially difficult circumstances, for whom resources are still far from adequate.

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* E/ICEF/1995/13/Rev.1.

6. Among the priorities of the NGO Committee are the following:

(a) The Committee will participate actively in the Fourth World Conference on Women, where it will continue to provide strong support to the new section on girls which has now been included in the Platform of Action. NGOs feel it is essential that the arrangements for the NGO Forum at Beijing facilitate effective interaction with delegations to the Conference. We therefore call on members of the Executive Board to use their influence to ensure that a satisfactory site is provided for the Forum;

(b) The Beijing Conference on Women is the obvious next step after the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, as the world struggles to reorder its priorities towards eliminating extreme poverty and furthering the social inclusion of women and children. Here, too, the NGO Committee has played its part, and we commend to your attention the Committee's report on its Copenhagen workshop entitled "Women and Children in Poverty - What Way Out? (available on the tables in this room).

7. Other items of concern include the following:

(a) We would urge members of the Executive Board to encourage the Open-Ended Working Group on the Review of Arrangements for Consultations with NGOs to support broader participation by NGOs in United Nations conferences and substantive dialogue with NGOs by United Nations organizations;

(b) The management study of UNICEF is an opportunity to define a new form of partnership with NGOs, taking into account the historic and supportive role which NGOs have played in the past. This collaboration between NGOs and UNICEF has made UNICEF unique among the United Nations organizations. We hope that the Executive Board might give support to the inclusion of a representative of the NGO Committee on UNICEF within the global advisory council that will assist the implementation of the management study. That action would enable optimum use to be made of our historical and practical links with UNICEF;

(c) Likewise, NGOs encourage UNICEF to play a proactive role in the HABITAT II Conference. UNICEF's creative initiatives in meeting with Mayors as Defenders of Children have moved the goals of the World Summit to a grass-roots level where the human environment shapes the daily lives of children;

(d) UNICEF's responsibility in monitoring the progress of nations in meeting the goals of the World Summit for Children is a laudable one and the NGOs stand ready to play a more significant role in support of this process by working with national or indigenous NGOs through capacity-building and resource transfer.

8. We, the members of the NGO Committee to UNICEF, agree with the assessment made by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali; the times require a new development paradigm and the cornerstone of that new paradigm is an inclusive partnership among United Nations organizations, Governments and NGOs. Nothing short of that is adequate to the challenges ahead.